Teacher Professionalism and Cultural Diversity: Skills, Knowledge and Values for a Changing Australia

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Abstract

In this paper I critically examine the changing nature of teacher professionalism in relation to educational policy-making, specifically, the new national policy for values education in Australian schools, and a newly endorsed Cultural Understandings *syllabus for teaching in New South Wales' secondary schools. I argue that these policy changes connect teachers' work to a broad citizenship agenda, where values formation is increasingly seen as a core responsibility of teachers, and intercultural education is proposed as a domestic strategy for social cohesion.*

Introduction

Teacher professionalism is a socially constructed term that is constantly being defined and redefined through educational theory, policy and practice. Debate over the meaning of the term has a long and contested history within the sociological literature. This is partly because professionalism is a term that accommodates a diversity of definitions – it can be used either descriptively or as an ideological concept to change, manage or control the nature of teachers' work (Lawn, 1996). In the past decade the impact of neo-liberal education reforms has dominated discussions in education journals, with educationalists debating whether these reforms have eroded professionalism, or reprofessionalised teaching in more positive ways. In this paper I examine the impact of recent policy-making on notions of teacher professionalism in Australia. My aim is not to position myself within the deprofessionalising/reprofessionalising debate, but to reinvigorate academic discussion about professionalism. I seek to re-examine the concept in relation to a post-September 11 educative context where values formation is increasingly seen as a core responsibility of teachers, and intercultural education is proposed as a domestic strategy for social cohesion.

The policy changes that I discuss in this article, as changing the nature of teacher professionalism, are those that connect teachers' work to a broad citizenship agenda. These include the recent prescription of values education as a formal component of schooling[1], and the NSW Department of Education and Training's new *Cultural Understandings* syllabus in Years 7-10 that has been endorsed for teaching from 2008. These policies can be interpreted as attempts by both federal and state government agencies to balance the diverse values and cultures within multicultural Australia with the need for national unity and social cohesion. Further, they aim to reinforce a collective national identity and to promote tolerance of cultural difference from within the classroom. In this paper I explore how these initiatives alter the nature of professionalism by demanding a new and expanded form. It is a form that locates teachers as central players in students' intercultural learning and values socialization. Before elaborating the characteristics of this newly emerging formation, I examine the changing nature of teacher professionalism.

The Changing Nature of Teacher Professionalism

As a socially constructed term, it is important to locate conceptions of teacher professionalism in relation to changing historical, political and social contexts. This is because multiple meanings have changed and developed over time and in contestation between rival stakeholder groups and their interests. As a form of ideology, professionalism can operate "as a strategy for control of teachers manipulated by the State, while also being used by teachers to protect themselves against dilution" (Ozga and Lawn, 1981, p. v). Appeals to professionalism can lead, for example, to the acceptance of changes in teachers' work because they are perceived to raise the status of teachers, or to resistance of them. An historical overview of the politics of teacher professionalism in the past half-century in Britain, for example, by McCulloch, Helsby and Knight (2000), highlights the ways in which the tradition of teacher professionalism as autonomy in the curriculum domain was radically challenged with the introduction of the National Curriculum. In a reinvented version of teacher professionalism, the professional autonomy of the teacher was sacrificed to the increasing demands of the state to control curriculum. The so-called "new professionalism" – an official and regulatory discourse advocated by successive Conservative governments and the "New Labour" Government – instead emphasises public accountability of performance and the individual responsibility of teachers to accept radically changed conditions (McCulloch et al, 2000). Such usage redefines professionalism as a form of occupational control – a conception that is central to the work of Ozga (1995, 2000).

Drawing on findings from a classic study of organised teacher behaviour conducted with Lawn (Ozga & Lawn, 1981), Ozga (1995, 2000) argues that the employment of a

professional ideology to regulate the behaviour of teachers in Britain has historically led to instability in the teaching labour force. She further maintains that as a result of more recent market-driven education policies and new management structures aimed at ensuring compliance, teachers are being deprofessionalised:

> The economizing of education . . . requires a redefinition of teacher professionalism, as accepting of the central control and direction of content and process in education, and of management as responsible for surveillance and monitoring of performance. (Ozga, 2000, p. 24)

Ozga's (1995) bleak assessment of the extent of teacher deprofessionalisation in the 1990s is not, however, universally endorsed. McCulloch et al. (2000) point out that such claims ignore the active role of teachers in responding to and reconstructing both policy texts and management practices. They further maintain that because of the changed conditions of employment, where new forms of relationship are demanded and new skills required, that teaching is being reprofessionalised. McCulloch et al. conclude by asserting that consideration of the extent to which teachers feel respected, trusted and valued by both government and the community should be central to any discussion of teacher professionalism. Such a position restores the role of teacher agency to models of professionalism by showing that teachers are not merely passive victims of negative community opinion. Instead, these researchers argue that professionalism entails a choice:

> The politics of professionalism are partly about government actions that affect teachers but they are also about the ways in which teachers choose to respond and choose to publicly depict themselves. (McCulloch et al., p. 118)

A strategy for regaining community respect is elaborated in the work of Bottery and Wright (2000). This strategy consists of a so-called ecological orientation to education where teachers are concerned with what happens in society at large and how broader forces impact upon their own classroom practice. At the institutional level this perspective calls upon teachers to consider ethical questions about educational equity and quality of provision, and the role that schooling plays in the distribution of life chances (Bottery & Wright). At the practical level this perspective requires teachers to move beyond subject expertise as a foundation for professionalism. Bottery and Wright argue that this approach runs the risk of insulating teachers from the broader goal of teaching – preparing students to be informed and responsible global citizens, who seek to create a world that is sustainable and socially just. Further, they argue that subject-based professionalism runs the risk of fragmenting teachers in a process that has been referred to by Hargreaves (1994) as curricular "balkanisation".

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) contribute to this debate by asserting that any form of professionalism situated in the personal practical knowledge of teachers, such as subject expertise, restricts the teachers' role to matters of classroom competence, and may prevent reflection on the broader moral and social function of education. This form of practice has been categorised in the literature as "practical professionalism" (Hargreaves & Goodson). The alternative ecological model of professionalism proposed by Bottery and Wright (2000) acknowledges the practical wisdom of teachers, yet stresses the provisionality of subject matter. Instead, these researchers call on teachers to collectively develop a professional response to the injustices and corruptions of society where economics now dominate policy formation (see also Bottery, 1998). Their proposed form of professionalism is embedded in a citizenship agenda where neglected public virtues are promoted over the prosecution of individual interest. The intention is to create teachers who are reflective of their own practice, adaptable to change, and, as active and informed citizens, can make meaningful contributions to the development of a genuinely participatory democratic and just society.

This discussion has characterized professionalism as a site of struggle (Hanlon, 1998; Sachs, 2003) between powerful deprofessionalising and reprofessionalising forces. Hargreaves (1999), who has identified four broad historical phases in the changing nature of teacher professionalism, argues that this struggle is a phenomenon of what he has termed the "post-professional age" (Hargreaves, pp. 14-18). This age embeds professionalism in an era of postmodernity but still draws on residual elements from previous ages. The four ages comprise:

- *The pre-professional age* – where teaching was viewed as a commonsense craft and good teachers were those who could manage a classroom and get their message across to their students.
- *The age of professional autonomy* – this period was characterised by teacher claims to professional expertise (partly in response to the relocation of pre-service education into universities) and the presumed right to autonomy which followed such claims.
- *The age of the collegial professional* – Professionalism in this age was characterised by role expansion where focus extends beyond the individual teacher and classroom. Collegial professionalism incorporates efforts to build professional cultures of collaboration and collegiality for increased professional learning and support. Role diffuseness, forced collegiality and work intensification adds a negative dimension to this age of professionalism.

- *The post-professional age* – is marked by a struggle between forces intent on deprofessionalising teaching, and others who wish to redefine teacher professionalism in more positive ways that are flexible, far-reaching and integrated in nature.

Within the post-professional age, contemporary patterns of educational reform (such as centralisation, increased prescription of curricula, and school self-management) are altering earlier notions of teacher professionalism. Hargreaves questions whether this age will see the creation of positive new partnerships beyond the school, that will enhance the individual and collective worklives of teachers, or whether it will initiate deprofessionalisation, as teachers flounder under conditions of uncertainty, multiple pressures, and intensified work demands. Examples of such demands include the increasing responsibility of teachers to prepare students to take their place in a changing postmodern economy, and more recently to address issues of cultural diversity and social unity within the classroom. Changes to state and federal education policies impact on the outcome of this struggle to define notions of professionalism and so it is to these that I now turn.

The Impact of Policy-making on Notions of Teacher Professionalism in Australia

The last two decades have seen a major shift in the ideological context of policy-making in Australia. Like governments throughout much of the Western world, governments in Australia are looking towards their education systems to solve both economic and social problems – to improve economic productivity and foster social cohesion. This approach has seen the integration of education into economic policy; the extension of free market principles into the field of education (Preston, 1996); and a resurgent interest in values and intercultural education as a way of achieving cultural harmony.

An example of professional discourse that first made an economic connection explicit was the 1985 Karmel report, the *Quality of Education in Australia*. This report was released during a period of intense school reform and award restructuring that occurred in Australia during the 1980s and 1990s. The report reviewed the effectiveness of the Commonwealth's involvement in schools, with a view to obtaining improved outcomes. In the report, Karmel argued that teachers lacked the skills to develop fundamental competencies in students, rigour in teaching, and curriculum consistency. He recommended that teacher focus be shifted towards student outcomes, public accountability and attention to basic skills. Throughout the report, teacher professionalism was constituted within a new framework – one that was linked to the

economy (Robertson, 1996). Teachers, as professionals, were essentially positioned as producers of efficient workers for a market-driven, post-capitalist society.

The Karmel (1985) report was an early example of education policy that was framed by a process of the "economizing" of education. This process ensures that economic interests dominate content and process in education and this in turn "requires that what counts as knowledge is redefined, for practitioners as well as pupils" (Ozga, 2000, p. 56). The Karmel report also contained elements of the neo-liberal philosophy that still dominates educational policy formation. In Australia, as elsewhere, neo-liberal education reforms have characteristically resulted in the decentralization of educational administration; increased prescription of curricula; intensification of teacher accountability; and a focus on the outcomes of schooling.

Neo-liberalism is based on the assumption that market forces are an efficient means of "creating the conditions for freedom of consumers, for allocating scarce resources, generating diversity and providing the form of flexibility the changing world order requires" (Furlong et al., 2000, p. 10). This philosophy, which according to Giddens (1993) is the meta-policy narrative in most of the so-called First World, aims at the complete marketisation of education through the establishment of a fully consumer-driven education system. Under neo-liberalism, education is no longer to be regarded as part of social policy, but rather as a sub-sector of the economy. By providing the necessary human resources and capital to compete internationally, education is perhaps even one of the leading sectors of the "knowledge economy" (Peters, 2000).

Government commitment to neo-liberalism and the new market agenda has provided a framework for the reform of education (and other public services) that emphasises features such as cost-efficiency, accountability and performativity. In Australia, these reforms have had a significant impact on government policies about initial teacher training and subsequent professional development, as well as on industrial debates and developments within the education sector. These reforms have resulted in what Sachs describes as a "set of paradoxes about the nature of teaching as a profession" (Sachs, 2003, p. 123). These include active debate about how to redefine teacher professionalism in more positive ways at a time when some evidence suggests that teachers are being deskilled and their work is becoming intensified.

Sachs' involvement in two national initiatives that sought to revitalise teacher professionalism during a period of reform has informed her view. Her work on the National Schools Network (NSN) and Innovative Links Between Schools and Universities Project, has directly influenced the notion of transformative professionalism that she advocates. This alternative paradigm expands the role of the teacher beyond the classroom to inclusion in a broader political project that requires collective and

collaborative action (Sachs, 1998, 2003). Transformative professionalism aims for occupational transformation rather than occupational control through positively altered relations between teachers, education bureaucracies, educational stakeholders and the community.

Sachs (2003, 2001, 1998) acknowledges contestation over a variety of different discourses of professionalism. She identifies two discourses, however, as those that have dominated recent debate in Australia. These are the discourses of democratic and managerial professionalism. Presented here in contrast to each other, these discourses share the same purpose of attempting to "shape the way teachers think, talk and act" (Sachs, 2003, p. 122). The first discourse, managerial professionalism, draws on the occupational ideology of managerialism. The influence of managerialism on the education system is evident in government policy such as the simultaneous devolution of school management and the centralisation of educational governance through tighter controls of curriculum and assessment. As a market-driven, technical-rationalist ideology (Hatcher, 1994) managerialism has involved a shift in both business and education from input controls to quantifiable output measures and performance targets (Peters, 2000). Its concern with performativity means that it values above all, accountability, economy, efficiency and effectiveness. A consequence of managerialism on teachers in Australia is an intensified workload through demands for increased documentation to prove effectiveness such as outcome statements and mandatory student examinations. As a discourse, managerial professionalism seeks to position teachers as unquestioning supporters (and implementers) of a competency-based, outcome-oriented pedagogy which corresponds functionally to the world of work (Robertson, 1996).

Democratic professionalism is an alternative discourse that was first introduced by the Australian Teachers Union (Preston, 1996). Not surprisingly, it emphasises collaboration and alliance-building between teachers and other educational stakeholders with the intention of altering traditional power relations. It is this form of professionalism on which the NSN and Innovative Links projects were premised as they attempted to develop "new forms of reciprocity between teachers, academics and other education stakeholders" (Sachs, 1998). This discourse of professionalism is close in nature to what Nixon, Martin, McKeown and Ranson (1997) refer to as "emergent" professionalism. Collaboration, collegiality, negotiation and partnership are key terms in the lexicon of this emerging form of professionalism that similarly emphasises new relationships and modes of agreement (Nixon et al.).

Sachs (2003) suggests that democratic professionalism is emerging from the profession itself. She further maintains that this form of professionalism is supportive of an activist teacher identity that has the potential to transform the practices and

beliefs of teachers, and the conditions under which they work. For Sachs, recasting teacher professionalism along more activist lines holds the most promise in terms of enhancing the status and conditions of teachers, repositioning them more equitably within policy-making processes, and improving the educational outcomes for students. Significantly, Sachs provides specific examples of teacher action drawn from the NSN and Innovative Links projects that demonstrate how activist professionalism can be substantive rather than illusory in nature. To this end, she outlines a protocol of principles and practice for activist teacher professionalism. This protocol includes features that are often cited as supportive of professional teacher practice generally, such as collaborative action amongst colleagues, to those that specifically relate to an activist identity such as a passionate engagement with work practices that are ethically oriented towards the achievement of socially responsible goals.

Sachs (2003) acknowledges that activist teacher professionalism anticipates, and depends upon, an educational environment that has not yet been fully realised in Australia. This includes the development of new forms and structures of affiliation and association between educational stakeholder groups. She is hesitant, however, in referring to activist professionalism as idealised in nature having witnessed many of the features of this form of professionalism in the daily practice of teachers involved in the two professional development projects from which she draws much of her data. Her optimistic aim is to extend the work of more teachers along activist lines by spreading stories of achievement – stories that speak of the possibilities that this form of professionalism embodies.

Sachs' (2003) notion of activist professionalism transcends restrictive typologies of teachers' work – and instead establishes links between teachers' work and their broader social and civic responsibilities. Since publication of her book however, the social and political context of Australia, particularly New South Wales, has changed – with new policy identifying values education as a national goal of schooling, and intercultural education as a necessary inclusion in secondary education. These policies may be interpreted in the light of a new global reality – marked by international terrorism, Middle East conflict and national security fears – as an attempt by federal and state governments to acknowledge a growing need to maintain national unity and social cohesion within an increasingly diverse, multicultural Australia. These policies can be understood then as a way of recruiting teachers into the Howard Governments' agenda to supplant multicultural policy and its emphasis on strength through diversity, with a new strategy that advocates national strength through unity (Galligan & Roberts, 2003). It is too early to say if the new federal Labor government intends to follow the same path, however, given the long-term commitment and the amount of money already spent on creating and implementing the *National Framework*, it is likely that the values' policy will remain unchanged.

This policy, and the soon to be implemented curriculum policy, suggest that a new form of professionalism is needed if teachers are to take a proactive role in the struggle to define what a professional teacher should think, say and do in the contested domains of values and culture. This new form of professionalism is examined in the section below.

Values and intercultural education, and teacher professionalism

A resurgent interest in values and intercultural education has been evident in Australia and in countries such as New Zealand, the UK and the US during the last decade (see for example Coulby, 2006; Halstead & Taylor, 2000; Lovat & Toomey, 2007). Jansen, Chioncel and Dekkers argue (2006) that the resurgent interest in values education and related policies reflects the insecurity of governments in liberal western democracies with the consequences of global immigration and the rise of multicultural societies. These policies coincide, they argue, with growing concern about social cohesion, vanishing values, and declining civic participation. Titus supports this connection, asserting that values education is emphasized in times "when educators and the public view social stability as threatened and moral standards weakened" (Titus, 1994, p. 1).

A review of theory and practice in values and intercultural education shows that these concepts have evolved in response to shifting educational priorities and social concerns. In recent years, values education has been used as an "umbrella term" to describe a range of curriculum experiences that have previously been depicted as character education[2] and moral education (Hooper, 2003; Taylor, 2000). These forms of education all involve explicit attempts to teach about values within the classroom. In this domain, the *National Framework* promotes a cross-curricular approach, however, values education has usually received a particular focus in the curriculum areas of health and physical education, and studies of society and the environment. Intercultural education similarly facilitates a form of value-laden learning, however, the focus is specifically on promoting social cohesion, tolerance and understanding, and ensuring that students are taught the skills and values needed to successfully participate in a culturally and linguistically diverse society.

In Australia, intercultural education has not yet been formally recognized as a cross-curricular priority, however, Tilbury and Henderson (2003) have identified its key features within many Commonwealth and State education policies (such as the new *Cultural Understandings Syllabus, Years 7-10*, NSW Board of Studies). Ideally, these features include learning that is socially critical, supported by progressive pedagogies, and oriented towards the development of a just and sustainable world. Values

education, on the other hand, is nationally prescribed through a regulatory policy – the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), 2005). This policy eschews positioning within a socially critical paradigm, with policy advocates effectively depoliticizing values teaching and learning by embedding it within a quality teaching framework. To this end, values education in Australia is currently mandated within a performative discourse of quality, with intercultural education framed by an alternative discourse of social critique. Despite these differences, values and intercultural education both connect teachers to a broader national discourse about Australian identity, cultural diversity and collective unity. Teachers may engage with this discourse in many ways such as by reflecting on the implications of their own cultural identity and developing culturally inclusive pedagogy for their classrooms, as well as teaching the content of values and intercultural education.

The *National Framework* can be interpreted as an attempt by the recently deposed Howard Government to balance the diverse sets of values and ideals inherent within Australia's multicultural society with the need for national unity. The policy asserts that some values are "shared" as part of Australia's democratic way of life and that these core values[3] can and should be taught within all schools. The values themselves, which are expressed in action terms, represent a mixed bag of personal virtues – such as honesty and integrity; social justice values – such as understanding, tolerance and inclusion; uniquely Australian values – such as a "fair go"; and values that seek to unify and strengthen Australia as a free and democratic country. The policy's emphasis on shared values suggests that a transmission approach to values education is advocated. This approach, commonly referred to as character education in the literature, argues for a more extensive role for schools in the teaching of societal values through direct student instruction and good role modeling from teachers (Prencipe & Helwig, 2002). Character education is based on the assumption that it is possible to identify a set of universal values and that students can and should be taught these at school.

The re-emergence of character education in British education policy has been recently examined by Arthur (2005) who maintains that there is no consistent definition of what is meant by character education in government curriculum policy documents. Despite this ambiguity, Arthur maintains that character education in Britain is consistently linked to citizenship education – a subject which became a statutory requirement in 2002. The conceptual framework used for citizenship education in Britain draws upon the Crick (1998) report which defined citizenship education as including three distinct strands: moral and social responsibility, community involvement, and political literacy. Prior to the release of the Crick report, an Australian commonwealth initiative – the Civics Expert Group (1994) examined civics

and citizenship in Australia. The Civics Expert Group, who identified a clear link between knowledge of our civic institutions, active citizenship and the maintenance of democracy, argued that Australians significantly lack civic knowledge. Following the recommendations of the Civics Expert Group, the federal government launched a national civics and citizenship education program, that became known as *Discovering Democracy* (DEST, 1997) after a change of government. The aim of the *Discovering Democracy* program was to help students learn about Australia's democratic heritage and the values underpinning it, including respect for others, freedom of speech, fairness and tolerance. The *National Framework* built on this earlier commonwealth initiative.

The *Values Education Study* (DEST, 2003) was another key influence in the development of the *National Framework*. The *Values Education Study* was a commonwealth project that funded 69 case-studied schools and recorded their attempts to design and implement practical means of enacting and evaluating values education within local school contexts. The study found that virtually all project schools provided information and data to demonstrate positive outcomes from their work in values education (DEST, 2003, p. 7).

The *Values Education Study* recommended the continued funding of school clusters to enable greater progress in the implementation of values education initiatives at the local level. These additional schools are funded through the *Values Education Good Practice Schools Project*, Stage 2 (2006-2008). As an academic partner working with a cluster of schools in a Sydney region on this project, I have witnessed teachers embrace an expanded form of professionalism that is located in their desire to guide students' personal and moral development, whilst facilitating technical, interpretive and reflective student learning. This is an enacted form of professionalism that supports the content-based and pedagogical concerns of teachers, whilst also allowing them to explicitly address a perceived problem of racism within the school cluster community. Within this cluster, teachers are using the extra funding and resources available to provide students with opportunities for intercultural learning through partnerships with culturally diverse schools. This approach stresses the potential of values education to transform school communities by improving school culture – a finding supported by the *Values Education Study*.

Some research also affirms the potential of values education to reinvigorate classroom practice and positively influence students' moral development. Australian researcher Terry Lovat (2005) maintains that values education has the potential to re-focus attention on the fundamentals of teaching[4] and that "an explicit curriculum around values education, taught using the criteria and parameters of quality teaching, can make a difference to the ways students speak about moral issues and how they behave" (Lovat, p. 44). This positioning of values education within a broader quality

teaching agenda is central to Lovat's work. Essentially, Lovat argues that values are at the very core of quality teaching – a process which he describes as "the dynamic interaction of subject content, pedagogical strategies and values to provide an optimal environment for student achievement" (Lovat, p. 12). Whilst I would argue that the connection between quality teaching and values education requires further elaboration within the literature, Lovat points out that the new values policy makes explicit reference to the language of quality teaching by extending the general notion of good practice pedagogy to incorporate the specific notion of "good practice values education".

Lovat's optimistic assessment of values education programs needs to be balanced, however, against a vast international literature that does not always concur. Halstead and Taylor's (2000) comprehensive literature review confirmed that only a small proportion of research on values education has focused on school practice and program effectiveness. Of this small field, Leming (1993) identified a number of study limitations. Most programs, for example, were only conducted in primary schools, and of the few studies that used multiple classrooms, considerable variations were detected in program effects between classrooms. Leming (1993) is also critical of some researchers who claim a causal connection between learning about values through contemporary character education programs and behavioural outcomes, arguing that establishing any correlation is problematic.

One finding that is shared between researchers in the UK and Australia is that the inclusion of values education into the formal curriculum has clear implications for all teachers in the area of professional learning (Halstead and Taylor, 2000; Lovat, 2005). Halstead and Taylor concluded their review by stating that there is an increasing need for an understanding of values development and methods of values education to form part of initial and in-service teacher training. These researchers further go on to argue that "the research does indicate the potential of some approaches, but teachers need support and training if they are to convert this potential into successful classroom practice" (Halstead and Taylor, p. 90). Lovat develops this point by listing what he describes as foundational components of training for values educators. These components include knowledge of ethics as a field of intellectual endeavour; induction into the moral and professional codes of conduct that guide teachers, including national standards and accreditation structures; and a conviction that values education can make a difference.

This gap in teacher training is surprising given that the *National Framework* espouses a determinative role for teachers in maintaining social cohesion. This significant role is also reinforced by some state policy such as the NSW Department of Education and Training's new intercultural education course for Years 7-10 students. The rationale for this new course is to:

> equip students, the citizens of the future; with the capacity to engage, in a proper and informed manner, with cultures within Australia and beyond. The study of cultures requires the provision of knowledge that informs values and develops individual and community responsibilities for a cohesive and just society. (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2007, p. 1)

Positioned within the Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) Key Learning Area, the Cultural Understandings syllabus is a new Board of Studies endorsed course that was available for teaching in all NSW secondary schools from the beginning of 2008. Schools need to apply to, and receive approval from the Board of Studies in order to offer this course.

The course acknowledges the changing and increasingly diverse nature of Australian society and aims to develop the skills and understandings of intercultural literacy amongst secondary school students. These skills and understandings relate to those necessary for effective cross-cultural engagement such as knowledge about different cultures, recognition of cultural stereotypes, and appreciation of cultural differences. The aim is to move beyond multicultural education policies that have been criticized as offering tokenistic understandings of minority ethnic groups, and insufficiently addressing issues of racism (Coulby, 2006), towards a form of education that facilitates intercultural respect and social cohesion. Whilst I would argue that the Cultural Understandings syllabus should be expanded to embrace and facilitate learning for social change – a goal that also provides learners with the tools to actively participate in, and construct a more peaceful, sustainable, and just world, the course does acknowledge that education plays a key role in promoting acceptance of and respect for our cultural diversity.

This new course offering connects teachers to a global context defined by an increasing interest in intercultural education – a circumstance that reflects changing priorities. This is particularly the case in Europe, where political developments such as the fall of the Berlin wall, the break-up of the Soviet Union, and expansion of the European Union, have awakened attention to the potential of education for intercultural understanding. The increasing interest also highlights the dialectical relationship between intercultural education and the political, economic and social environment. As Tilbury and Henderson (2003) assert, intercultural education "is clearly influenced by existing relationships and social conditions even though ultimately it seeks to transform these" (Tilbury & Henderson, p. 81). Such lofty goals speak of the need to connect teachers to a new pedagogy of learning that embraces national priorities and global concerns.

The values education policy and the *Cultural Understandings* course both seek to promote social harmony. The difference between these policies lies in the fact that the former attempts to achieve this goal through the development of a collective unity, based around shared values, whilst the latter seeks cohesion through appreciation of cultural diversity. The teachers' role in this goal is fundamental and complex, requiring sincere reflection and evaluation of current practice so that the prescribed values can be taught with clear and conscious intent. The new syllabus also requires teachers to develop culturally responsive pedagogy and interculturally inclusive curricula. These complex tasks demand an extended professionality from teachers who are required to move beyond mere subject and pedagogical expertise. The policy changes discussed herein relate to a broader professionalism that encompasses a national and global perspective.

Policy and professionalism: reconsidering the implications

School education has become an important site for debates concerning shared values and social cohesion in Australia's plural society. This debate is frequently played out in the media with some politicians sensationalizing the issue by lamenting the perceived moral deterioration of Australian youth, and connecting general concern about a lack of common values to national security fears. At the federal and state level, policymakers are addressing our country's growing ethnic diversity with school based policies that seek to promote unity, as well as knowledge, understanding and tolerance of cultural difference. This paper has discussed how the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* supports social cohesion by identifying "shared" values as a specific component of the formal curriculum. The new *Cultural Understandings* syllabus again links the teachers' role to wider social and political changes by attempting to address the increasing cultural diversity of Australian society through the teaching of intercultural literacy skills to secondary school students.

These policies are part of a broader dialogue about how Australia defines itself and its relationship to the rest of the world. They highlight the changing nature of Australian society, and alter the meaning of teacher professionalism according to a national agenda increasingly concerned with maintaining social cohesion. A key challenge for teachers in achieving this policy goal is finding a professional balance between respecting cultural diversity and establishing a common vocabulary and purpose. The new policies oblige teachers to engage with fundamental questions of educational purpose, and to acknowledge that the inculcation of common values and learning about other cultures has become central to the meaning and purpose of schooling.

Within this policy context, teachers' claims to professionalism based on traditional features such as autonomy, subject expertise, and altruism appear incongruous. An emerging form of professionalism, promoted by government agencies and defined within a context of rapid social and global change, instead values characteristics such as adaptability, broad public accountability, a commitment to national security goals, and responsibility for students' moral and cognitive development. As a regulatory discourse this form of professionalism competes with a practitioner version that is enacted within classrooms as teachers convert policies into pedagogical practice. It is here, within the classroom, that teachers may reassert professional control through their interpretation and implementation of policy statements. Through this process teachers may enact a powerful form of professionalism that transcends the boundaries of school and classroom by focusing on the requirements of global citizenship. This expanded form of professionalism enables teachers to play a determinative role in sustaining social cohesion, but it also privileges the needs of students. By teaching students the skills necessary to create and maintain a socially just, equitable and sustainable world, teachers are able to prepare students for global citizenship, as well as future employment.

Endnotes

[1] *Values for Australian Schooling* are identified in the Australian Government Department of Science, Education and Training's document, *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (2005). This policy asserts that some values are shared as part of Australia's democratic way of life and that these core values are to be taught within all Australian schools.

[2] A term commonly used in the research literature, especially in the United States.

[3] The nine values articulated and defined for explicit teaching comprise care and compassion; doing your best; fair go; freedom; honesty and trustworthiness; integrity; respect; responsibility; understanding, tolerance and inclusion (DEST, 2005).

[4] These fundamentals of teaching are listed by Lovat (2005, p. 45) as the teacher; the teacher's content and pedagogical knowledge; and the teacher's capacity to form relationships with students that convey a commitment to them as individuals and as global citizens.

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